

A DREAM IN THE MORNING.

AND the One to whom are intrusted the newly-born into heaven turned to the soul, faint still with earthly tremors and yet wedded to mortal joys, and said,—

“Thou hast loved much!”

“Yes,” she answered, “and one most of all. Time is empty till he come to me, and yet the years shall be as days if he come at last.”

Then a shadow, as of human pity, fell upon the face of the One, and he answered, “His place is not thine, except he win it by ways full of peril that may not be described.”

The soul cried out sharply, and looked upon him as though he were an enemy, even though she stood within the walls of that which the earth-born call heaven.

“His place shall be mine,” she cried, “if mine may not be his. I will go down to hell, if he be there.”

“Nay,” said the One, compassionately, “these be childish words, left of the old earth,—babble of place and lot. But choose now. Wilt thou rebel against the Mighty, or wilt thou submit to what hath been decreed from of old?”

The soul stood white and thin as if, in that moment, she endured a second death.

“There is no way,” she asked, “by which I can give up my place to him while I descend and pray for him in his?”

“No way.”

“Then must I submit.” The soul paled and withered like one in whom the second death had already been accomplished, though the fires of hell were alight in her anguished eyes. She turned her about, and then looked back upon the One, and said, “Is there not some little instant marked out from all time when we may meet,—an instant only?”

“The instant is thine,” said the One, in sweet kindness, “and this is how thou shalt find it. Straight before thee, as thou standest, lies a silver track, and that shalt thou follow till thou hast reached the end which overhangs the void below; and there at the end shalt thou cling, with blackness above thee and blackness beneath. For that way shall he come, after many years, hurled by the winds upon his darkening way, and for as long as thou canst cling to him he is thine.”

Then the eyes of the soul became sweetly alive once more, for hope had fed and nourished them.

“And if I cling altogether,” she faltered, “and if I draw him back upon the way?”

“Nay,” said the One, sorrowfully, “if thou canst, the gift is thine; but no one hath yet done so fearsome and so great a deed.”

The soul paused for no further question, lest she might be altogether denied, but she hastened swiftly upon the appointed way, as one who sees joy at the end of her journey. And when she had found the

silver track, she sped fast upon it, heeding not her loneliness nor the strange fears that would assail her. And as she went, the way narrowed until it lay before her as a line of light, and she could scarce find room upon it for her slender feet. The void above her was black, and the void below lay as a pit where midnight reigned without a star. Yet still her heart prayed ceaselessly to the Love which is for all that the love which was for one might not lose that which had given it life. And when the way became so narrow that none without wings might traverse it, she lay down, clasping it with both arms, and so crawled outward until she had reached the point overhanging the void.

Now, how long the soul lay clinging there none may know but the Infinite Love with whom all other loves are one, but it is written that many years went by on earth before yet that other soul, so loved and so desired, was done with mortal life. But there came a moment when, like a rustling leaf upon a wailing wind, it came fleeting down the void where lay its mate with stiffening arms but ever-living eyes. And she cried aloud with gladness, "Oh, thou hast come! thou art mine again!" and with one hand she drew him to her face, so that they clung and kissed as of old, though over the blackness of the void.

"Now thou shalt do as I bid thee," she broke forth, in great sobs, "or else are we undone. Hold thou fast to my hand, and cling to this line of light. Look not behind thee, though my hand be unloosed, but cling with all thy strength; and when thou hast gained a foothold, walk—nay, run—till thou hast reached the fair country beyond, and, though thou hear me not, look not behind thee."

So, still clinging with one hand, and holding her love with the other, she dropped her frail figure from its resting-place, and it hung perilously over the nothingness below. And, not knowing what he did, her love climbed fearfully to her place, and made his way along the narrow track, still holding her hand, so that she was dragged painfully for many paces. And there came a moment when she cried,—

"Loose me now, and let me go, and look not back for me!"

She drew her hand from his, and threw up her other arm in silent signal of farewell,—though he might not see it,—and gave herself up to darkness and the pit; but lo! the void would not receive her, and the air was as earth to her joyful feet. And, treading thereon, she overtook her love, as he made his slow way upon the narrow road, and walked beside him, with cheering words, though only the blackness was under her. And when he comprehended what she had endured for his sake, it was as if he had been new-born, through much travail and anguish, to a knowledge of that which is high, and a scorn of the false joys which had once beguiled him.

The pathway grew wide enough for two, and she trod upon it with him, and hand in hand they went smiling into the pleasant country beyond.

And there the One appointed to cherish the souls newly come into heaven met them with arms outstretched.

"Thou hast loved much," he said to her who had found her joy.
"Yea, thou hast loved much!"

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